

**Canadian and International  
EDUCATION  
Canadienne et Internationale**



**In this issue**

**(Re)Conceptualizing Black Studies  
in Canadian Schools**

**Global Education in Canadian Schools: Formative Influences, Ideological  
Perspectives, and Emerging Christian Fundamentalist Critiques**

**Potential Impact of Strategic Planning in Decentralizing  
a School System: the Ghana Experience**

**Implications of Intra-European Mobility on Education:  
Education for Immigrants and Refugees**

**Political Legitimacy and Educational Policy in Nigeria in the 1970's:  
the Case of the Nigerian Military Governments, 1966-1976**

**Volume 24, Number 1  
June/Juin 1995**

Executive of The Comparative and  
International Education Society of Canada  
1995-1997

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*Canadian and International  
Education is indexed in the  
Canadian Education Index and  
Sociology of Education Abstracts*

Printed on recycled/recyclable paper

ISSN: 0315-1409

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## EDITORIAL

During the first week of June, 1995, the Comparative and International Education Society of Canada held its annual meeting in Montreal. A new executive board has been elected with Eva T. Krugly-Smolka at the helm. A new editor team for the Canadian International Education Journal is also being formed, and the Journal will be again heading West in the near future. Changes come but the Journal's mandate remains the same as one of the main tool serving the comparative education populace.

Toward this goal, the present issue assembles authors of different origins and subjects regarding various parts of the world. G. Dei stresses the importance of African Studies in and to the Canadian public school system and discusses the challenges facing teachers and educators. Exploring the linkages between the diverse concerns of Continental Africa and Africans in the Diaspora, he proposes some necessary changes to improve African Studies within the existing Canadian education structures.

T. W. Mouat, E. Choldin and M. Zachariah investigate the critiques of global education put forward by certain Christian fundamentalists and caution about the possible effect of the fundamentalist criticisms which are narrowing only on the transformative perspective.

J. O. Mankoe continues D.T. Gamage's article in the last issue and suggests that from the many attempts in Ghana, ensuring grassroots participation seems to be the most effective solution to improve the education system. But this must be supported by the top administrators' willingness to divest power.

S. Majhanovich with L. Majhanovich review recent trends in migration in Europe and the accompanying problems in education placed upon the host countries. Part of these problems may be resolved by applying some examples from Canada, a nation with much experience in the schooling of immigrant children and adults.

R.P. Asagwara points out a classic case of welfare politics using the example of the Nigerian education policy between 1966 and 1976. Success achieved by the military rulers benefitted the political leadership more than the population and the political community.

In the book reviews, R.P. Coulter finds a thorough research with a readable prose to expecting mothers in K. Arnup's *Education for Motherhood: Advice for Mothers in Twentieth-Century Canada*. B.D. Tennyson finds reinforcement of Asagwara's article in Bacchus's *Education As and For Legitimacy*, this time in the West Indian setting. In L. Rooyen & N. Louw's *Sexuality Education, a Guide for Educators* D. K. Sharpes sees a good framework in which parents and educators can work together to build understanding about sexuality education.

# POTENTIAL IMPACT OF STRATEGIC PLANNING IN DECENTRALIZING A SCHOOL SYSTEM: THE GHANA EXPERIENCE

A Report by  
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The governance structure in Ghana has been centralized for many years, with the the government issuing policy decisions to the districts for implementation. Centralization slowed development efforts, so for many years attempts have been made at restructuring. In the main, these attempts involved the appointment of committees and commissions to recommend reforms, but their implementation was plagued with problems, including dual allegiance of local officers to their national and regional superiors, and the inefficient utilization of the scarce resources available. Most recently a new committee, Public Administration Restructuring and Decentralization Implementation Committee (PARDIC), formed in 1983, proposed new measures. Its policies were directed at improving government services by ensuring grassroots participation. These proposals were partly implemented to some degree, but decentralization of educational reforms remains unfinished. One reason may be that the government decentralized throughout the country at once rather than in phases, as was suggested by some stakeholder groups. Resources may be inadequate to support broad-based reforms.

This paper reports findings from a study of this faltering attempt at reforms. One conclusion is that the school system, with only some reforms effected, has experienced few benefits, including the introduction of new school programs, and increased attention to staff development. The system is still grappling with problems: insufficient resources, lack of commitment of local communities, constraints of centrally determined rules, and top administrators unwilling to divest power. Thus the program implementation has not been effective.

To effect program implementation, strategic planning is necessary. Some planning had been done, but some important issues need to be reassessed. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the entire system must be addressed. More importantly, strategic planning should include planning, analysis, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Important questions need to be asked including: Where are we?

Where are we going? How do we get there? How do we confront the obstacles that may be met? This may be an effective strategy towards achieving success at reforms.

Pendant plusieurs années, la structure gouvernementale au Ghana a été centralisée. C'est le gouvernement qui envoyait les décisions de politiques aux districts pour les faire appliquer. Cette centralisation a ralenti les efforts de développement, ainsi pendant plusieurs années on avait essayé à réorganiser l'administration. Les tentatives de réforme, en gros, constituaient la création des comités et des commissions pour recommander la marche à suivre, mais le résultat a été criblé de problèmes: une double loyauté des cadres locaux envers leurs supérieurs nationaux ainsi que régionaux, et l'utilisation peu efficace de maigres ressources. Plus récemment, un nouveau comité, le *Comité pour la réalisation de la décentralisation et de la réorganisation de l'administration publique* [Public Administration Restructuring and Decentralization Implementation Committee (PARDIC)], formé en 1983, a suggéré de nouvelles mesures. Ses politiques se sont dirigées vers l'amélioration des services gouvernementaux avec la participation du peuple. Une partie de ses propositions ont été réalisées à un certain degré, mais il restait beaucoup à faire avec la décentralisation. Une des raisons c'est que le gouvernement a voulu décentraliser tout le pays en une seule fois, au lieu de le faire en plusieurs étapes, comme l'avaient suggéré des groupes intéressés. Les ressources n'étaient suffisantes pour des réformes à grande échelle.

Cet article rapporte les constatations d'une étude faite sur cette tentative de réforme mal assurée. L'une des conclusions est que le système scolaire n'a presque rien gagné après avoir été touché par quelques réformes, telles que l'introduction de nouveaux programmes, et l'augmentation du développement du personnel. Le système doit encore lutter contre de multiples problèmes: des ressources insuffisantes, le manque d'engagement des communautés locales, les contraintes des régulations prises au niveau central, et le refus des administrateurs supérieurs au partage du pouvoir. La réalisation du programme ne peut pas être efficace.

Pour bien réaliser un programme, c'est nécessaire d'avoir un plan stratégique. Il y a eu des planifications, il y a aussi d'autres problèmes importants à évaluer. Il faut prendre en considération la solidité, la faiblesse, les opportunités, et les menaces du système en entier. Plus important encore, le plan stratégique devrait comprendre le planning, les analyses, la réalisation, le contrôle et l'évaluation. Les questions importantes que l'on doit se demander sont: Où sommes-nous? Où sommes-nous allés? Comment pouvons-nous y arriver? Comment pouvons-nous surmonter les obstacles rencontrés? C'est peut-être une stratégie efficace pour réussir à réaliser les réformes.

Decentralization as an administrative process in Ghana has been aimed at improving the delivery of government policies, services and programs. The process has meant providing opportunities to the lower level administrators as well as grassroots to participate in deciding their needs and contributing to the development needs (Okulo-Epak, 1989). The need for such participating arises

from the evidence that it is becoming increasingly problematic for the government to provide adequate social services at a time when resources are declining. The term decentralization has been used in a wide range of contexts hence, writers have not agreed upon a common definition. In Ghana, the policy of decentralization, as currently being pursued, refers to "an inter-organizational transfer of power to geographic units of local government lying outside the command structure of central government," (Eghan and Odum, 1989, p. 78). From this perspective Ghana's effort at decentralization policy is examined.

### The Rationale For Decentralization in Ghana

For many years, particularly since February 1966 when the first civilian administration was removed from office by the military, it has been considered prudent to transfer decision-making power down the administrative hierarchy to the grassroots in Ghana. The economic constraints facing the country indicated that the government alone could not shoulder the responsibility of providing all the resources for education in Ghana, and that the communities who are the beneficiaries of education, could be asked to contribute to the cost of education. If the local communities are being called upon to provide a substantial amount of the resources for education, then it seems plausible that they should participate in educational decision-making in accordance with the adage: "He who pays the piper calls the tune." In doing so it is incumbent on the planners to avoid pitfalls by taking lessons of success from elsewhere. Indeed, citizen participation in decision-making is consistent with the traditional system of deciding on community matters. Bonsu (1971) pointed out that popular participation in local administration has a long history in Ghana. Even before the British rule, the Chief in a Council was responsible for local government in his administrative area. By custom he had to consult the mass of the people through their chosen elders before arriving at decisions which affected the welfare of the community. This welfare, of course, included the provision of basic education. In spite of such history of traditional participatory decision-making, the governance structure in Ghana had been centralized for decades with decisions and directives issuing from the national capital to the regions, from the regions to the districts, and from the districts to the schools. In education George (1976), noted that in Ghana's centralized governmental structure, formal education, like most matters, was a Central Government responsibility. The Central Government established policy and passed legislation governing the organization and administration of the formal educational system. The Education Act of 1961, for example, prescribed a public school system that was provided and controlled by the Central Ministry of Education. The Ministry at the national headquarters in Accra was responsible for policy, planning, curriculum research and development, and other matters. It was also responsible for the nine (now ten) Regional Education Offices (one in each

region). Each Regional Office was headed by a Regional Education Officer. Under each Region was a number of District Education Offices each headed by a District Education Officer. Those in charge of implementation at the lower levels were then expected to implement the Ministry's decisions with fidelity. Under such administrative structure, George (1976) noted that the responsibilities of the local governments were those assigned to them by the Central government and were limited to contributing some funds for public elementary school and managing them. The Minister of Education himself formulated policies mostly with the approval of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, Head of State and first President of the Republic of Ghana. Bretton, cited in Bray (1984, p. 17), pointed to the stifling of innovation in Ghana during the early 1960s when even minor decisions had to await Nkrumah's personal approval. He suggested:

As a result the learning and correcting capacity of the government and administration of Ghana was submerged in a welter of irrational, contradicting, erratic, highly emotional perspectives concerning events at home and abroad: the learning capacity of Ghana was reduced to the teaching capacity of Kwame Nkrumah.

The administrative structure of the government called for change. The rationale, as pointed out by Safu (1971), was that in a decentralized system local authorities were the real decision-making agencies with a certain amount of autonomy and independence. The general feeling in Ghana then was that a real devolution of decision-making power was long overdue. Centralization had slowed down the development efforts of the people. The Public Administration Restructuring and Decentralization Implementation Committee (PARDIC) appointed in 1983 to work on the decentralization policy pointed out that "the surest way of prolonging the development crises Ghana found herself in was for the central government and its ministries to continue to usurp the right of the people of Ghana to make their own decisions regarding how to work themselves out of the crises" (Eghan & Odum, 1989, p. 70).

#### Previous Efforts at Decentralization

Asihuo (1992) recounted that, from 1949 onwards, several committees and commissions of inquiry were set up to review the administrative structure and recommend reforms. Outstanding among these were the Watson Committee (1949), Sir Coussey Committee (1949), Sir Sydney Philipson Commission (1951), Sir Frederick Boune (1955), The Greenwood Commission (1957), The Regional Constitutional Commission (1957), and The Akuffo-Addo Commission (1966). All these bodies made conclusive recommendations for the transfer of decision-making



authority from the centre to the local levels. These recommendations were, however, not known to have been fully implemented.

While several past committees and commissions made recommendations towards the implementation of a decentralization policy, key contributions were made by the Mills- Odoi Commission which was appointed in 1968 to review the structure and remuneration of public services in Ghana. The Commission found the government of Ghana highly centralized in Accra (Eghan and Odum, 1989). The Mills Odoi Report therefore recommended that

... in order to improve efficiency and to provide a machinery of government better designed to accomplish programs for rapid social and economic development, there should be radical decentralization of many of the functions undertaken by the central government.

Administrative control was to be transferred to local administrators who would decide on their own priorities and implement them, of course with financial assistance from the central government. The implementation of the Mills-Odoi proposals was, however, opposed by conservative elements within the Civil Service on the grounds that they were too radical and unfamiliar. Top civil servants therefore pleaded for a complete rejection of the proposals. Instead of decentralization, the top officials favoured the delegation of powers to the Regional and District Authorities. Some heads of departments did not like the idea of decentralization because they felt it would weaken their grip on their regional and district subordinates (Nti, 1975). Such administrators perceived decentralization as partial loss of power and privileges. For the decentralization to work at the lower levels, the co-operation of top civil servants was necessary. Thus, as Asibuo (1992) pointed out, from the period of the first military rule in Ghana and even before that period, the policy has been considered by successive governments. Then in 1971 the government, after a critical assessment of the administrative machinery, posed a major question to the people on whether the relationship (including control measures) between the central and local governments was satisfactory. The answer was an overwhelming "No" (Bonsu, 1971). The idea of setting up committees to re-examine the governance structure was revisited when committees such as the Oko Commission was appointed in 1976. The Oko Commission formulated an operational framework for the decentralization exercise, and recommended comprehensive planning so that the decentralized programs could be expanded later (Eghan and Odum (1989). The Commission's work had some impact in the sense that it led to a Rural Development Project with the assistance of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The decentralization policy had, however, not taken off completely. Later, other Committees were appointed to examine the

issue and make further recommendations. Among these committees were the Kaku Kyiana Committee and the Sackey Committee, both on the Restructuring of Ministerial Organizations, the Kuffuor Committee and the Asamoah Committee, both on the Decentralization of National Administration and Organizational Structures, and the Sowu Committee on the Formulation of the Content of Socio-Economic Development Programs for Decentralized National Administration. Most of these Committees were formed in 1982. The Sowu Committee, for example, identified the goals of Ghana's decentralization as follows:

- power should be truly reverted to the people;
- as many people as possible should take part in decision-making process that affect their lives;
- there should be mobilization for production and distribution;
- there should be accountability.

However, it seemed that the position of the top civil servants from whom power would be transferred to the people at the local levels remained virtually unchanged. Further attempts at the implementation of the policy failed partly due to the lack of support from the top civil servants, and partly due to other causes as well. Eghan and Odum (1989, p. 12), listed the other causes for the failure to implement the policy in Ghana as follows:

1. the dual allegiance of district departmental officers to their regional and national heads on the one hand, and to the District Chief Executive and the District Councils on the other;
2. poor channels of communication between the district departmental heads and the District Chief Executive, which strained their relationships;
3. the general unwillingness on the part of most of the district departmental heads to cooperate with the District Chief Executive, largely because most of the district heads were of higher status than the District Chief Executive himself;
4. lack of well-trained and experienced departmental staff to work at the district level;
5. inadequate office and residential accommodation at the district level to attract more officers of the right calibre;
6. half-hearted commitment on the part of governments to see through the implementation of the decentralization program.

### *Current Efforts at Decentralization*

The causes for the failing in decentralization attempts suggest that there was one basic missing factor -- the lack of comprehensive planning that would seriously seek input from those who would be required to implement the policy. Such inputs would have to be sought from the national top officials and those at

the local levels -- district departmental heads and staff and community leaders. Indeed, as Eghan and Odum (1989, p. 249) drawing an example from the temperate world, contended:

It is inconceivable to see how without planning and the admission of individual citizens to their primary responsibility to themselves for the well being, people who live in the harsher parts of the world in the temperate zones would survive winters during which no food could be grown.

The current efforts at restructuring the governance structure in Ghana are based largely on the proposals made by the Public Administration Restructuring and Implementation Committee (PARDIC) which was appointed in 1983.

The Public Administration Restructuring and Implementation Committee

When a new government, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) assumed office in December 1981, fresh attempts at decentralization were made. One major effort made by this government was the establishment of the Public Administration Restructuring and Implementation Committee (PARDIC), mentioned earlier, in September 1983 to make fresh attempts at restructuring public administration. The goal of the PNDC Government, like the previous governments, was to involve as many people as possible in decision-making in matters affecting them (Eghan & Odum, 1989). Accordingly, the PARDIC was charged with (a) working out modalities for nationwide implementation of the ministerial restructuring and decentralization program, (b) assisting in the implementation of the program, and (c) arranging public education back-up for the program, among other things. The work of this committee culminated in the decentralization of 22 government departments including the Ghana Education Service (GES) in 1987 (PNDC Law 207).

#### Decentralization of the General Government Structure

The recommended restructuring made by PARDIC, of course, still depended on the goodwill of the political and administrative officials working hand-in-hand with educational planners. Most of these recommendations towards decentralization were accepted by the government. The PNDC began by establishing District Assemblies in all the 110 political districts in 1987. The Assemblies were new administrative structures created to support the decentralization of government machinery at the district levels. The process was intended to embrace the people at the local level through allocating specific functions to: (1) Town/Area Organizations, (2) District Organizations, (3) Regional Organizations, (4) Ministerial Organizations and (5) National Coordinating Organizations. As a result of these recommendations, the structure

of Government Machinery and District Development, as noted by Aryeetey, Boskye, Awua-Boateng, and Dotse (1989, p. 44) was made up of (1) Office of the PNDC, (2) Ministerial Organization, (3) Regional Administration, and (4) District Administration.

The Office of the PNDC was the highest political, administrative and legislative body in Ghana. This office was divided in two main parts: (1) the PNDC Secretariat which served the PNDC members, and (2) the Secretariat of the PNDC Member and Chairman of the Committee of Secretaries which served as the cabinet secretariat of the government. At this level inputs from the subordinate organs of the government were concretized into policies. The policies were then communicated and interpreted to other institutions. The necessary institutional procedures were then prepared for their implementation and enforcement.

The PARDIC, among its recommendations, stated that all Ministries were to be decentralized with the exception of Defence, Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Justice (Eghan & Odum, 1989). Today each Ministry has four main divisions: Policy Planning, Programming and Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation; Research, Statistics and Manpower Development; Information Management and Public Relations; and General Administration.

The restructuring of the Ministerial Organizations was extended to the Regional Administration. The reason was to give meaning to its role as a buffer between the Central government and the Districts and in promoting development at the local level. Each Regional Administration has two divisions: Administration and Development Programs, each headed by a Director. Under the District Administration each district has the District Assembly, the highest political and administrative body in the district. The objective of creating these assemblies was to extend the restructuring exercise beyond the Regional Administration to the District level. Each Assembly has an Executive Committee with five sub-committees for (1) Economic Development, (2) Social Services, (3) Technical and Infrastructure, (4) Justice and Security, and (5) Finance and Administration. Educational matters peculiar to the District are presented first to the Social Services Sub-Committee which submits them to the Assembly for debate and for a decision to be taken. Education matters, for example, are not supposed to be referred to the regional or the national headquarters any longer. With the coming into existence of the 1992 Constitution that ushered in the Fourth Republican government of National Democratic Congress (NDC), decentralization is being implemented under the NDC administration.

A number of problems have developed as a result of the dual hierarchy of administration -- the central government and the local (district) administration (Local Government, 1994, pp.3-4). A few years after undertaking the restructuring exercise it has been observed that:

1. The central government agencies are encroaching upon the rights and responsibilities of the weaker local government bodies. Resources have been duplicated between local government agencies and central government bodies, are not fully utilized, and have been partially wasted.
2. The various administrative bodies do not have sufficient consultations with each other. The limited resources available to each are therefore dissipated without the required impact expected by reason of the size of the input in personnel and material resources.
3. The sharp distinction between central and local government agencies has only served to create a poor and distorted image of local government as a corrupt, inefficient and worthless relation of the central government. This development has not inculcated in the citizens the civic relationship which would enable them to see themselves as part of the whole system of government and administration.
4. The large number and small sizes of the local councils have made it difficult for the local government bodies to raise enough revenue to finance local services delivery including education.

As a result of these and other problems that have confronted the system, Aliwoi (1992, p. 9), the Secretary (Minister) of Local Government observed:

... no effective decentralization has taken place yet. The 22 so-called decentralization departments continue to report to Accra [the national capital] through the regions. Their staff are appointed, promoted, paid, and disciplined from Accra. Their enabling laws and instruments retain their highly centralized character. And the staff attend meetings of the District Assembly more out of fear or respect than out of any legal obligation. So that is one of the major unfinished businesses of decentralization.

Addressing this problem of unfinished business requires more effective planning. The multiplicity of committees appointed by previous governments to deliberate on the decentralization, and the lack of success at decentralization suggest that planning may be part of the solution. The failure of the policy has of course affected education as one of the 22 departments supposed to have been decentralized.

### Decentralization in Education

The Restructuring Committee (PARDIC) proposed the structure of a ministry to include

- (a) a comprehensive local government system
- (b) a new structure of a four-tier system, and
- (c) District Councils as basic administrative units.

The district was the basic decision-making unit. In education a major innovation was the appointment of Directors of Education to head each of the 110 education districts in the country. These directors were deemed to be experienced educational administrators who could make quality decisions affecting education in their districts. Prior to these appointments, school districts were headed by assistant directors. District Directors' decisions were, however, subject to the approval of the Services Committees of the District Assemblies. Within the public school structure, another reform was the introduction of a new junior secondary and a senior secondary school system to replace the old school system. Communities which had too few students and hence low school enrollments were to pull resources together to form one secondary school for efficient utilization of resources. In any case, by their locations, no community was to be farther than five kilometres from the nearest secondary school. Junior Secondary School Implementation Committees were set up at the town/village and district levels. Their role was to monitor the operation of the new schools. Headmasters with the requisite qualifications and experience were recruited to head the schools, particularly at the junior and senior secondary levels. Short seminars aimed at updating their administrative skills were organized for them. Crash programs were also mounted for teachers to upgrade their teaching skills. Emphases were placed on practical subjects including carpentry, masonry, tailoring, auto mechanic, technical drawing and cookery. With these preparations the new school system took off nationwide in September 1987. These preparations must be appreciated. Prior to these reforms, consultations were made between the Ministry of Education and the general public including educational policy makers and administrators, Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), community leaders and the general public. After an assessment of the projected educational resources, many individuals and organizations such as the GNAT expressed pessimism at the success of the reforms. This pessimism related especially to the local mobilization of resources to make the change successful throughout the country since the communities were expected to contribute substantially to education. Educators realized that given the economic constraints facing the country, there would possibly not be adequate resources to implement the reforms nationwide. The government, as the initiator of the reforms, was therefore advised to implement the reforms in phases. In fact, according to Eghan and Odum (1989, p. 57), the Asamoah Committee appointed in August 1982 in its first recommendation stated:

That in view of scarcity of financial, human and material resources as well as infra-structural facilities and logistical support, decentralization should not be carried out in one big jump but should be in phases to ensure smooth and orderly implementation.

Government leaders, however, assured the nation that adequate assistance in the form of loans and grants would be obtained from foreign donors to support the system. As it turned out, although some foreign assistance was obtained, it was inadequate. The reliability and commitment of external donors to provide substantial resources had their limitations.

It had been proposed that the implementation of the policy would be a primary responsibility of the people at the community level. However, the people did not seem *ready* to embrace and implement the new system because not enough education towards community awareness had been provided them. Ghana had operated a centralized system for decades during which the government seemed to provide most social services to the people. And, as Eghan and Odum (1989) pointed out, for many years Ghanaians as individuals, and as members of society, had simply learned to be taken care of by the central government. The communities were not used to making significant contributions to education. For this reason, any new system that sought to effect changes would require community education by the policy initiators. Such education, however, appeared to have been relegated to the background.

The communities were required to provide a minimum of resources such as helping to erect *workshops* (structures equipped with wooden benches and tools to assist students in learning practical skills). Yet it was not clear to what extent the people had been prepared to confront problems of the reforms in terms of providing psychological and material support. The Implementation Committees charged with monitoring school operations did not survive for long. Thus under the reforms it was not clear what mechanism had been put in place to continuously tackle problems that might emerge. Thus although some preparations had been made towards the implementation of the policy, their adequacy needs to be weighed against the success of the implementation.

### *Evaluation of Progress*

Four years after the policy take-off, Mankoe (1992) in a study conducted in Ghana, sought to determine from the perceptions of stakeholders (educational administrators, school principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders) the extent of their participation in educational decision-making and the extent to which the new policy had dealt with other pressing issues in education, particularly in the provision of educational infrastructure and teaching matters.

#### *A. Devolution of Decision-Making*

On decision-making, responses indicated discrepancies between stakeholders' actual level of participation and the level at which they would have wished to participate in educational decision-making. Although such discrepancies were found with respect to many decision-making areas, they were greater with

respect to issues related to educational resources than with pedagogical issues. It was still unclear which decisions were to be made at the national, regional, district and school levels. The wide discrepancies pertaining to resource issues may not be too hard to understand if it is borne in mind that the quality of education provided in the classroom was largely contingent upon the adequacy of resources provided.

It was also observed that school-based administrators continued to receive directives from the headquarters through the district directors. Under the decentralized system, as envisaged by the policy makers, the school with its advisory council composed of the principal, representatives of teachers, support staff, parents and students (in the case of senior school) was supposed to be the primary decision-making unit. Experience, according to the school administrators and teachers, showed that this was not the situation in the educational system. The local communities, led by the district assemblies, were still looking up to the central government for most of the resources for the schools.

### B. Benefits Achieved

Stakeholders acknowledged that a number of benefits had so far been derived from the new educational reforms. Some of the benefits attributed to decentralization included: the introduction of new skills in special areas for students, emergence of new programs to match students' choices, increased capacity of educational administrators to monitor educational service, and greater attention to staff development. For example, one educational administrator observed

There is an alertness of teachers to duty and conscious efforts by them to upgrade or improve their skills. There are frantic efforts by students to acquire practical skills. Both boys and girls now do not shy away from studying subjects formerly restricted to a particular sex, e.g. carpentry, home economics and life skills.

### C. Problems

A number of problems were also identified. School district administrators, headmasters, and teachers identified one major problem as the unfavourable conditions under which the system was initiated. Other problems noted by stakeholders include (a) insufficient allocation of resources to schools, (b) inadequate incentives for educational leaders to play leading role, (c) insufficient local resources to tap, (d) lack of commitment of local community members, (e) constraints of centrally determined rules, and (f) top administrators unwilling to divest power.

A community leader also observed:



There is a big problem with the construction of *workshops*. Although communities are desirous to undertake these projects, they lack financial resources; the result is that many workshop structures that started off briskly about a year or two ago are still at the foundation level. It is strongly suggested that the government provides funds for their completion if the idea of vocational or technical bias inherent in the new system is to have any meaning.

It was difficult to reconcile this situation with the government's initial assurances regarding adequacy of resources to implement the reform policy. Inadequate planning might have contributed to the setbacks observed in the system.

### *Conclusions*

The new reforms are beset with obstacles. The anticipated benefits associated with decentralization in Ghana, namely the expectation that the community would be able to make educational decisions and to make effective resource contribution to education, have not been realized. It was expected that education would emphasize the pupil acquisition of practical skills so that school graduates would not all look up to the central government as a major employer. This expectation has also not been realized because of lack of adequate resources. Some headmasters and teachers also noted that because the reforms started at the middle of the school system, rather than from primary one, results of the final examinations of both the new junior and senior school systems had so far been poor (Mankoe, 1992). Yedu (1993, p. 13) has observed that the more education is reformed in Ghana, the more problematic it becomes. He remarked:

The introduction of the junior and senior secondary school concept was drummed up as the panacea to educational ills. Examination results so far do not suggest any answer to the problem. After this expenditure running into billions of cedis with foreign exchange component and a huge World Bank loan, ... there is a need for another bout of expenditure in the name of reforming the same 'reformed' education.

Moreover, it has been difficult to monitor the system, determine the negative impact and the necessary solutions. These unanticipated results may be largely attributed to lack of effective planning that would tap inputs from the policy initiators themselves, educational planners and experts, top civil servants, school district and school-based administrators, teachers, parents and community leaders including chiefs.

After many years of attempts, the goals of decentralization, particularly as it relates to education, have not been realized. One of the issues to seriously

address to get decentralization well under way may be institutional strategic planning.

### *Strategic Planning - Theory*

#### *Its Nature*

Planning means choice of assumptions about the future, proceeding to set objectives, formulating immediate goals, defining action programs, implementing programs, evaluating these programs, and providing feedback to reset the planning process. Strategic planning, on the other hand, seeks to define what might or could happen and to present alternative courses of action under different scenarios (Benveniste, 1989). Benveniste suggests that to understand strategic planning, we need to ask broad questions:

1. What stage of development are we in?
2. What should we do if this even happens?
3. How can we cope with this problem?
4. What are our goals?

#### *Process*

Strategic planning should include planners, analysts, implementors, monitors and evaluators. As O'Connor, cited in Benveniste (1989) noted, planners should ask: What impact would this event have? How probable is it? How will we know if it happens? What consequences will it have? What will we do next? Strategic planning does not assume that it can achieve comprehensiveness nor does it assume that there exist best solutions. The process should involve the identification of whatever strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats that may exist in the organization; planning should proceed from there.

To achieve the goal of strategic planning, it is important to emphasize the role that analysis, implementation, monitoring and evaluation play to carry a plan through. Policy analysts carry out research and other actions needed for the elaboration of a complex set of decisions designed to achieve the goals of an organization, of a set of organizations or of all citizens in a region, nation, or the world. Implementers are the individuals or groups within or outside the organization who would carry out the policy or plan. Monitoring is concerned with the production of designative claims and is therefore primarily concerned with establishing factual premises about public policies. Evaluation, by contrast, is a policy-analytic procedure used to produce information about the performance of policies in satisfying needs, values, or opportunities that constitute a "problem." Monitoring answers the question: "What happened, how and why?" Evaluation asks the question: What difference does it make? (Dunn, 1981, p. 339). The

success of any innovation in education, therefore, depends on the extent to which government leaders address these policy issues.

The adoption of this policy is not, however, as straightforward as it may seem. Decentralization must be planned well for it to produce the intended benefits. Cook (1990, p. 154) acknowledged that decentralizing decision-making is a viable option as an organization grows and becomes more complex. He pointed out

As an organization grows it becomes more difficult to make all the important decisions in one centralized location. As an organization becomes more complex, it becomes more difficult for a few key leaders to be the most knowledgeable experts in all phases of the operation. To cope with growth and complexity, decisions have to be shared with a larger pool of people and the pressure to decentralize mounts.

Planners have a major task to perform in this crucial moment. Hence Dyckman (1986, p. 20) charged planners in a moment of adversity to discover and enrich the content of planning by including physical planning which is indivisible from the social, economic content. He charged planners to locate this content in a true political context. The society and the state must be seen for what they are, especially the society which is primary.

According to Dyckman, strategic planning should include

The politicization of bureaucratic and market decisions and demystification of technologies; the image, utopian or not, of how community power might be exercised; and the new scenarios of the post-industrial society, with its implications for the definition of work, the redefinition of social usefulness, and the support of payments needed to smooth the transition. They might also include the support and guidance to mobilize communities toward the ideal of self-governance in a complex society, explication of the responsibilities of the exercise of contributions to the revival of interest in, and ideas about, the alternative social forms of the good life. (p. 21)

This is an urgent call for close collaboration between governments, planners, civil servants and citizens in deciding on the crucial national questions and the means to address them as a strategy for adapting to changing circumstances. This call implies decentralization which has been touted as an appropriate strategy for educational service delivery.

### Challenges

Government leaders in Ghana, like leaders in many other developing countries, face serious challenges now and in the years ahead. Their environments

have changed dramatically in the past decades as a result of economic crises, tax problems, demographic shifts, value changes, budget cuts, and the devolution of responsibilities to local areas (Bryson, Freeman & Roering, 1986). Although these authors were referring to socioeconomic developments elsewhere, their observations are true to conditions in many developing countries including Ghana. As the authors pointed out, these developments have led to a now familiar dilemma. On the one hand, traditional sources of revenue for most governments often are unstable, unpredictable, or declining. On the other hand, demands for government services have not slackened.

While these realities pertain to all sectors of the government machinery, they seem even more crucial in the education sector since in many countries education is among the most expensive services to provide. In Ghana, for example, education consumes not less than 30 percent of the annual national budget (Education Budget Estimates, 1994). Consequently, it is necessary for governments to strenuously search for cost effective ways of providing education. Strategic planning is one possible way of delivering educational services more efficiently and effectively. This notion was supported by Knapp, Ginige, Lamichhane, and Thapa (1990) when they affirmed that

Universally, educators are faced with the task of *doing more with less*. There are increasing and changing demands being placed on the educational system while at the same time the requisite resources have become increasingly scarce. Educational administrators are being pressured to operate systems that are both effective and efficient. In response to this turbulent environmental condition, many educational administrators are turning to strategic planning in the hope that solutions to their dilemmas may be found. (p. 1)

Most centralized governments have realized that educational services can no longer be provided from the central government sources alone, and that the time is now ripe, even overdue, to ask the beneficiaries to help plan for education. Some beneficiaries can indeed pay, and perhaps are prepared to do so provided the invitation to help plan is accompanied by genuine efforts to foster community awareness of the value of education. This has sometimes meant adopting the policy of decentralized educational decision-making.

A critical assessment of the governance of educational systems in many developed and developing countries indicates a shift from centralized to decentralized governance, particularly within the past three decades and, with the ever increasing emergent societal problems, this is not surprising. While many writers believe that some important benefits can be derived from decentralization, other writers think there is little reason to believe that the benefits and advantages so widely associated with decentralized administration are likely to accrue. Chau (1985, p. 97), for example, argued that there may be a pseudo-form of

decentralization which does not, in fact, imply any change in the distribution of power between the centre and the region. He, however, admitted that *by giving more initiative to the regions, the administrative process may be accelerated and hopefully lead to a more efficient use of resources while power basically lies with the centre*. Referring to the need for appropriate decision-making, Hurst (1985) envisioned a more holistic perspective when he said:

A great deal depends on the calibre of the people making the decisions. Not only must local decision makers be capable of making sound choices, they must also be able to engage their colleagues in effective and efficient implementation of the chosen course of action. If good leadership is not purely a matter of ingrained personality or genetic endowment and can in some measure be taught, then a considerable training effort would be necessary to ensure that decentralization schemes do not simply result in placing administrative burdens on the shoulders of people unable to support them. (p. 81)

Weiler (1990, p. 435) noted that conclusions drawn from the decentralization debate *lead to the search for alternative perspectives that could provide a better account of the political dynamics surrounding decentralization policies*.

Conyers (1982) also observed that *most of the objectives which decentralization is intended to achieve such as improvement in the management of rural development cannot be achieved by decentralization alone*. The implication is that a country needs to analyze its own particular situation in order to draw an appropriate line between what to centralize and what to decentralize. For example, appropriate strategies are needed to ensure that resources -- both human and financial -- are efficiently and effectively directed so that the future scenario which develops is as close as possible to the desired goal. Without appropriate planning techniques, such resource allocation can be subjective and can even act against goal attainment (Unesco, 1982).

These observations affirm the need for strategic considerations to be seriously addressed in the process of decentralizing administration to solve a country's educational problems. They do not necessarily negate the efforts at decentralization. Indeed, many writers, including Dessler (1976), Bray (1985), Caldwell, Smilanich and Spinks (1988), Yannakopoulos (1980), Bacchus (1990), Brown (1990) and Glickman (1991) have written extensively in favour of decentralization in educational governance. McLean and Lauglo (1985, p. 16) stressed that different social theories underlying ideological rationales for educational decentralization suggest that educational decentralization may be introduced relatively successfully in some situations and less so in others. A lot depends on the appropriateness of the strategies adopted. Major questions related to the shift from centralization to decentralization policy include: What are the

inherent prospects for a developing country that may arise from this policy change? What are the pitfalls to guard against? Why do some policy makers continue to favour centralization?

Whatever the arguments, many countries see the need to involve those at the grassroots in making decisions about education. Among these developing countries are Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Indonesia, Nepal, Brazil, Costa Rica and Papua New Guinea (Yannakopoulos, 1980; Conyers, 1983; & Bray, 1984). The involvement of those at the grassroots requires effective planning for successful implementation of planned programs. It is important to note what impact strategic planning may have on the formulation of a policy such as decentralization.

### *The Impact of Strategic Planning on Ghana's Decentralized System*

The purpose of strategic planning is to ensure a proper balance between long-range goals and objectives and short-range exigencies. It also investigates alternative decisions ahead of time to ensure that they are not made unconsciously, haphazardly, and in a fashion that pre-empts other decisions (Knapp et al., 1990). Without this balance, real decentralization will not occur, and the policy may only amount to more effective ways of doing the old things. For example, under the new system, Ghanaian schools seemed to focus on learning theoretical subjects more effectively rather than emphasizing practical skills since adequate learning tools were not be available for the learning of practical skills. Drucker, cited in Taylor (1982, p. 12) declared that a society whose maturing consists simply of acquiring more firmly established ways of doing things is headed for the graveyard -- even if it learns to do these things with greater skill. In an ever-renewing society what matures is a system or framework within which continuous innovation, renewal and rebirth can occur. Within the policy of decentralization, planning objectives must be set by giving sufficient thought to the limited resources available as well as the cultural, social, and political factors in the environment. Benveniste (1989, p. 55) noted that effective planning is an art of creating bottom-up consensus about the future -- a consensus that happens to be useful because, once the plan is implemented, it produces desirable, enduring, and even harmonious outcomes.

Resolving these issues may not simply be a matter of determining what educational goals and objectives should be and what the ends should be. It may not be a matter implementing a committee's recommendations, since Ghanaian experience has shown that to be inadequate. Hence Kaufman and Herman (1991, p. 191) have urged planners to undertake these activities:

1. analyze those supports (strengths) that are available to implement the strategies and tactics -- not selected now, but useful later when actually developing the

strategic action plan -- which ultimately will achieve the vision of "What should be;"

2. identify those weaknesses which should be corrected in achieving the desired vision;
3. identify the opportunities that exist in the environment which have not been previously utilized; and
4. discover threats that exist in the environment which can be avoided, or for which strategies can be developed to diminish consequent negative impact.

Bryson, Freeman, and Roering (1986, p. 65) pointed out that strategic planning, a process that assists governments in dealing with grave national problems, is "a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions shaping the nature and direction of governmental activities within constitutional bounds." They suggest that strategic planning should focus specifically on a government corporation or agency and on what it can do to improve its performance. This focus ensures a high degree of probability that the present and future resources at the disposal of the management would be allocated only to activities within the framework of the organizational mission, and that the resources so allocated would yield acceptable results within a stated time frame. For this reason, it was incumbent on the Ghanaian policy makers to spell out alternative action plans from which planners could choose the most promising one. Such a choice could be made after a careful analysis of supporting and restraining factors, as they relate to each alternative, is considered. In doing this, it is essential to consult with the beneficiaries and integrate them. Unesco (1982, p. 7) captured the idea succinctly when it recommended that long range educational planning must take place within the context of a given society if it is to ensure that desired social structures are being recognized and attained, and that values desirable are being respected and further developed. The process of planning or policy analysis is integrative. Consultations with implementers and beneficiaries provide an opportunity to exchange information, reach agreements, and present package deals (Benveniste, 1989, p. 12).

A conclusion that can be drawn from these observations is that the successful design and implementation of a decentralization policy must be combined with strategic planning. This calls for a close collaboration at all stages of the policy among top politicians, policy makers, planners, educational administrators and even more importantly those whose role will be to implement those policy decisions. All available types of expertise must be tapped. These observations have important implications for policy-makers in combining strategic planning with policy decisions.

### *Implications for Strategic Policy Making*

It may indeed be too early at this stage to make a fair assessment of Ghana's decentralized system. Some benefits have accrued, but there are formidable constraints as well. It is beneficial to focus on the constraints identified at any period of the operation through, for example, periodic appraisals. It must be acknowledged that some planning had been done prior to the implementation of the new system. How successful the system was after four years of operation is, however, open to question.

In determining the needs of an educational system, Witkin (1991, p. 253) asked: Do needs assessments take into consideration the concerns and wishes of students, parents, and teachers? Don't the decision-makers often do what they want to, anyway? Harrison (1991, p. 224) cautioned that when an organization asks stakeholders about their perceptions and expectations of the agency, it had better listen to what they have to say, including representatives of local schools, business, industry and legislators. Any conflicting process may be counter-productive, hence Quinn (1987, p. 19) advised policy makers and planners to improve strategic decisions by (a) systematically involving those with most specific knowledge, (b) obtaining participation of those who must carry out decisions, and (c) avoiding premature closure that could lead the decision in undesirable directions.

As Wilkinson (1986) pointed out, in strategic planning commitment is essential in the pre-planning phase, and that without the visible and enthusiastic support of the planners and members of the local communities, any planning process is doomed to fail. Miller and Buttram (1991) suggested that collaborative process in planning should begin when the decision to initiate school improvement activities is first made. Effective strategy must be technically workable, politically acceptable to key stakeholders, in accord with the organization's mission and core values, and must be ethical, moral and legal. This requires leadership styles that involve an analytical understanding of the whole organization and its environment, skills in identifying strategic issues, coordinating strategic decision process, and organizing and implementing plans and strategies (Patterson, 1984).

O'Brien (1991, p. 165) recounted that all organizations have a budget to manage, staff and clients to organize, resources to allocate, funding sources to develop, expenditures to control, and decisions to make, in all these areas that will affect its future. As already noted, Implementation Committees were established at the onset of the decentralization policy in Ghana. These committees were to monitor the adequate and prompt supply of inputs and their effective utilization in the system. They were also charged with the evaluation of the operation of the entire system. The committees were, however, short-lived because, they did not hold any legal authority with which to perform their functions. These committees



needed the requisite legal authority and incentives with which they would faithfully perform their national assignment. This need was lacking.

True, there were failures in the Ghanaian system. But as Brady (19-4) counselled, the key to sound evaluation is convincing participants *that failure to achieve certain goals or objectives will not be taken as a negative reflection in their performance*. This must be accepted and adhered to by top managers, particularly at the initial stages of trying to implement strategic management. It was not clear what mechanism had been formulated to evaluate the system whether summative or formative. That the school system was still grappling with problems is not the distressing factor. It was not certain what efforts were being made to address those problems. Makridakis (1990) has assured us that

It is rare that actual outcomes are the same as those predicted when plans are made. Inaccurate forecasts, competitive moves, unforeseen events, unanticipated difficulties, lack of adequate resources, changing environmental conditions, new underestimated constraints, unpredicted resistance to implementing the plans, and many other factors can affect implementation and cause deviations between plans and reality (p. 127).

Thus the policy required an in-built self-checking system that could constantly appraise ongoing performances and provide the necessary missing links. This link seemed to be the single most crucial missing factor in Ghana's attempts at educational reforms. This is an urgent call for policy makers to reappraise the policy and its effects, identify what strategic plans may help to achieve the educational objectives for which the policy was designed and implemented.

#### *A Concluding Comment*

Decentralization must achieve its intended goals and objectives. Towards this end, the first strategic decision to make is the determination of the mission or purpose of the organization. The client is the one who basically makes this determination in cooperation with the experts who can help provide solutions. Thus effective mission statements always proceed from the outside in (McConkey, cited in Ensign & Adler, 1985). Developing countries will continue to grapple with educational problems in their search for effective means of providing educational services. Solutions to such problems cannot be provided by any single expert. Critical educational questions must be asked, valid answers must be diligently sought. Short-term mistakes may be made, but they must be vigorously confronted for the long term attainment of national educational goals and objectives. In my view, this is the whole basis for strategic planning in education. This view must be the underlying factor for projected benefits to be derived from educational decentralization.

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